A QUESTION AS TO RESTORATION AND PROGRESS.

In common with most London folks, I have managed to steal a day or two from business in beautiful weather, and in the course of my travelling I visited one of our famous old abbeys. So many thoughts crowded upon me during and after my visit, that I venture, at the risk of being thought presumptuous, to send them to you for insertion in your excellent paper, if you think them worthy of it. In the first place, I was struck with the appearance of desolation and ruin, where anciently it was apparent grandeur of design and magnificence of decoration had been combined to produce an overwhelming effect upon the worshipper; and I then thought why should we not restore this building as it was—build up the wounds caused by the destroyer, trace out carefully the labours of the decorator, and in the spirit of the ancient workers replace its lost beauties. The building was well worthy of it; but then arose one difficulty, about which my thoughts were busy:—the central tower, both transepts, and some bays of the nave were Romanesque in design: the extension of the nave was Early English: the choir again was Decorated: a screen at the east end was in the Perpendicular style: the organ loft in the north transept was in a debased style of the Renaissance; while immediately behind it arose the large window lighting the transept, which had a four-centred arch, and therefore, I suppose, belongs to the Tudor period.

Now, one thing that perplexed me was, how was all this mixed material to be harmonised? If you had begun to dispense with any one style you must dispense with all, for it is quite evident that the building is a reflex of the fashions that prevailed in architecture through the different ages of its erection. Now, what I want some of your learned friends to solve for me is how to deal with the restoration of such a fabric. As to favouring one style at the expense of another, that is absurd; because a succeeding generation might think differently from us, and undo our work, and call what we had done in our wisdom by quite a different name fifty years hence. This is the first point I want answered. Now for another.

Over the small door that leads from the side aisle of the chancel into the south transept, I observed that the thick coating of whitewash on the Romanesque arch had been in one place rubbed off, and what to my prying eyes seemed to be revealed was a Byzantine or Roman scroll in colour. Now, I have no doubt that this part of the building, when first erected, must have been one glow of colour from floor to roof: the small glimpse I got would lead me to expect great things from a careful scraping of the walls. The point here, then, is,—how will you harmonize all the styles I have named in point of colour? If I recollect my lesson aright, the treatment of Romanesque colour is breadth and boldness, while the Tudor is little better than heraldic dabs of paint and gilding. Answer me this, ye wise men. And then, again, the utilitarians will say, what is the use of restoring a building for merely rustics and visitors to gape at, and which only stretches out its huge length like an ichthyosaurus in the heart of a dull fossilised country town, from which the stream of busy life has been diverted? Now here I will turn Solomon, and tell you what I think about it. I should like to see the building restored thoroughly throughout, not as a place for rustics to gape at, and vergers to profit by, but to make it what it was originally intended for,—a centre of intelligence and a means of usefulness to the surrounding neighbourhood. Such were the intentions of the founders and benefactors, though they were perverted by the ambition, the selfishness, and the ignorance of those by whom the trusts were to be administered and the benefits conferred. Those who abused their trust were put to the rout long ago; but, unhappily, the institutions themselves got such a bad name through the wickedness of their administrators, that they have never recovered the blow, and only remain like fossils in an age of remarkable progress. Now, how shall we galvanise them? I will tell you, Mr. Editor. The choir and transepts I would retain for divine worship exclusively. The Lady and other chapels are at present in ruins. These I would devote to my purposes; also the chapter-house, library, dormitory, refectory, cloisters, &c. &c.; and all these I would restore exactly as they were built; and all these together I would make a great public educational establishment, open to all who chose to avail themselves of it.

England is confessedly too militarian. Unless a pursuit leads to pounds, shillings, and pence, it is naught; and so only those are followed that lead to this desirable end. These are mostly mere dull systems of routine, not generating thought, and so the age becomes an age of mediocrity. Now, Sir, restore each of these old abbeys, and establish in each of them a dozen professors, with stipends of 300*l.* per annum or so:—your men of genius, so they pursue their studies, care little for more than will honourably sustain them. Exact from them a moderate amount of teaching for their stipend, and you will soon find the institution crowded with students of all ages, desirous to add to the little they know,—the young farmer to his chemistry, the young squire to his policy, the gardener to his botany, the grazier to his zoology, the miner to his geology, the poet to his rhapsody, &c. &c. It is generally supposed that education is merely shaping the mind of the child; but that which we, as a nation, mostly want is, the scientific attuning of the erratic genius,—the hammering the native ore into the tuneful metal that rings responsive to the prompting of noble thoughts, and else would return but a dullard sound. Such institutions as these scattered over the country would do an incalculable amount of good, by drawing up the hidden genius that now expends itself on trifles or worse things, would elevate the tone of surrounding society, and diffuse its influence even to the hearth of the humblest villager, whose gifted son would carry his spark of genius to this fount of knowledge, and cease not till the broad refulgence of his lamp had lighted up the land.

Aha! my enemy of the breeches pocket will say, where are your funds to come from? I answer that no doubt Mr. Whiston and gentlemen of his way of thinking could show where they might be found sufficient to restore the buildings, appoint the professors, and render what are now fossil reproaches living engines of progress.

A WANDERING AMATEUR.

THE VICTORIA PIER, PORTSMOUTH.

A LOCAL paper, with reference to the desire of the directors of this "snug little property" to extend their structure beyond its present boundaries into the harbour's mouth, and excavate the bottom to enable steam-vessels to come alongside at the lowest time of tide, suggests in lieu "a *floating stage* to run out from the present pier or platform to the distance of fifty feet or more, with a guy chain each way, as, when occasion required, it would only be necessary to let go one chain, north or south, to remove the obstruction to the free navigation of the harbour. This simple contrivance would meet all the requirements of the case, and cost the company at the utmost not more than 500*l.* to do well." It is time something was done: we crossed from the Isle of Wight the other day and were tossed about in a small boat, and wetted through, before we could land, the steam-boat not being able to approach the pier.

We, in our turn, will give the directors a piece of advice, and that is, not to charge a traveller carrying a carpet-bag, 3d. for the miserably insufficient accommodation they are able to afford. Persons who are interested in the Isle of Wight should strive to lessen the obstacles to a ready communication.

At Ryde they should contrive some means of carrying passengers from one end of their long pier to the other. In this town there seems to be much activity and life just now; indeed, throughout the island the visitors are numerous. The cottages and other buildings which have been recently erected or are going on, do not seem calculated to increase the beauty of this, which is certainly one of the most beautiful pieces of England. A central "committee of adornment," with branch boards, could do much good here, if it were but by preventing much ill.

CURSORY COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

It has often struck me, Mr. Editor, that under an occasional title such as this, many useful and amusing scraps or crumbs of comment and reflection or suggestion, on points, topics, or illustrations which have previously appeared in your columns, might be gathered up and recorded under separate side headings,—scraps, I mean, not altogether meriting the dignity of separate articles, however short, but of too much importance sometimes to be quite thrown away, without some little loss of interest or utility. Many a time, I am sure, in reading an article, on whatever topic, in your pages, the reader must pick up ideas or suggestions of this description, of which he would willingly "make a note," however rough or hasty, for you to put into shape and to thrust in amongst others under this standing title, whereas, having no such fitting place for them to appear in, they drop into oblivion, although they might even happen to be of value when afterwards turned over and further reflected on in the minds either of other readers or of the author himself.

"What improvements in science might we not flatter ourselves with the hope of accomplishing," says Dugald Stewart, in his Elements of Philosophy, "had we only activity and industry to treasure up every plausible hint that occurs to us! Hardly a day passes when many such do not occur to ourselves or are suggested by others; and detached and insulated as they may appear at present, some of them may, perhaps, afterwards, at the distance of years, furnish the keystone of an important science."

I speak from experience: while yet a mere youth, I stumbled on this very passage in reading the works of Stewart, and immediately converted it into the standing motto of a series of note-books under the title of "Chaos," which I have continued now for about a quarter of a century. I have found this practice of noting down, on certain subjects, every likely hint that occurred to me, either in my reading or reflections, to be a most valuable one, and I can compare it to nothing so correctly as to a potent lever for lifting up the mind out of immaturity, passivity, and ignorance, and teaching it to think. Such a lever as this, let me incidentally recommend your younger readers to lay hold of without loss of time. My more immediate purpose in alluding to it, however, here, is merely to say that it is the benefit derived from this system of collecting stray ideas and suggestions in my own experience that induces me to propose the adoption of an occasional string of "Cursory Comments and Reflections" in THE BUILDER. These I do not mean that you should confine to mere suggestions in science or art, however, but think they should be made as miscellaneous as possible.

Perhaps the best way to indicate my meaning would be to begin at once with a few comments or reflections of my own; but my purpose was merely to suggest the occasional notification of such comments, not to make any; and to this purpose I would have felt it the more prudent to confine myself, inasmuch as not being either an architect or an artist professionally, any comments or reflections of mine on such subjects must necessarily be regarded as of little value: nevertheless, in order all the more clearly to indicate my meaning, and perhaps to show that even non-professional readers may be able in some measure to amuse or interest, in this way, on minor points at least,—I shall, *pro formâ*, note down two or three little comments and suggestions which I recollect of having made while lately reading in some of your past numbers.

The Guilloche and Fret in Greek Architecture.—Some remarks on magnetic science, and on certain "magical-looking experiments by Faraday" in diamagnetism, in an article on

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